



Healthy Workplaces

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the *Healthy Workplaces* program?

A: The Healthy Workplaces program recognizes and assists Howard County workplaces that are committed to improving employee health and well-being. *Healthy Workplaces* is run by the Howard County Health Department as part of the Healthy Howard Initiative.

Q: What is the Healthy Howard Initiative?

A: The Healthy Howard Initiative was launched in 2007 by County Executive Ken Ulman and Health Officer Dr. Peter Beilenson. It is a community-based initiative that uses accreditation programs to facilitate the advancement of “healthy” policies in important, everyday institutions such as restaurants, schools, and workplaces. The goal is to build a model public health community where residents are surrounded by a range of clean, safe, and healthy activities, products, and environments.

Q: How is the program structured?

A: There are two major components: recognition, and assistance in improving your efforts.

- **Accreditation:** Your organization may be eligible to receive Bronze, Silver, or Gold certification in recognition of your overall commitment to workplace wellness. You also have the option to apply for the Innovation Award if you wish to showcase a particular policy or program that you believe is a cut above the rest.
- **Technical assistance:** All Howard County workplaces, regardless of whether they are accredited or not, may contact the Health Department for support in their workplace wellness efforts. Many resources are provided on our website as well, and the newsletter can help to connect you to community events and developments.

Q: When is the application for accreditation due?

A: The application will be made available in late April. Applications for the 2010 cycle must be emailed or postmarked by midnight on Friday, August 27, 2010.

Q: What are the benefits of becoming a *Healthy Workplace*?

A: Benefits of being a certified Healthy Workplace include...

- Public acknowledgement of your achievement from the Health Department
- A boost to employee morale as your commitment to their well-being is recognized
- Eligibility to win a monetary award for innovative policies and programs
- Increased visibility as your business will be listed in the program’s print and online advertisements and in community publications
- *Healthy Workplaces* plaque to display at your workplace
- Worksite wellness-related newsletters and resources from the Health Department
- Technical assistance from the Health Department to support your current efforts as well as plan for future activities and policy development
- Improved employee health, productivity, and potential health cost savings



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Q: What qualifies an applicant to become a *Healthy Workplace*?

A: There are many different ways to qualify, making it easier for workplaces of all sizes and business models to apply. The application includes a long list of potential qualifying criteria across six main areas of worksite wellness: 1) Culture of Wellness; 2) Nutrition; 3) Physical Activity; 4) Mental Health; 5) Safety; and 6) Environmental Health. Each applicant must meet a certain minimum number of criteria in each area in order to be recognized as a Healthy Workplace. Those with fewer items checked might qualify as Bronze, while those with more might qualify as Silver or Gold.

Q: How do I apply for my business to be certified as a *Healthy Workplace*?

A: It is easy to apply. Just follow the steps listed below. There is no application fee.

Step 1: Obtain a copy of the Healthy Workplaces application

- You can download the application in Microsoft Word format from our website: go to www.hchealth.org and click on Healthy Howard Initiative, then Healthy Workplaces.
- You may also request an application from the Healthy Workplaces Coordinator at (410) 313-6268 or email healthyworkplaces@howardcountymd.gov.

Step 2: Fill out the entire application

- You can either type your answers directly into the application, or you can print it and hand-write the answers.
- Detailed instructions are included with the application. Be sure to complete each section of the application and include any supporting documents.
- If you run into any difficulties or need assistance in completing the application, contact the coordinator at (410) 313-6268 or healthyworkplaces@howardcountymd.gov.

Step 3: Submit your completed application

- You can email us your completed application or you can print it and submit it by mail to the address indicated in the application.

Q: When will I know if my business is a certified *Healthy Workplace*?

A: All businesses will be notified by the Health Department in September 2010.

Q: Can any employee complete the application?

A: Any employee can complete the application on behalf of a business or company. However, the CEO/President or a Regional or Human Resources Manager must include his or her signature on the cover sheet before it will be accepted.

Q: How long does it take to complete the application?

A: This varies depending on the extent of your wellness benefits and how familiar the applicant is with those benefits. It can be done in under an hour, but many organizations take more time to flesh out their application more and better show off all that they do to promote



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health in the workplace. Applying for Gold status may take a bit longer as it requires demonstration of an improvement in health behaviors or outcomes.

Q: Can I start the application and come back to it at a later time?

A: Yes! You can download a copy of the application to your computer from our website or request one by email. You will then be able to save it and work on it whenever you want.

Q: Why are there different levels of certification?

A: There are three award designation levels for certified businesses – Bronze, Silver, or Gold. Each certification level holds the company to a higher level of commitment to employee health and wellness. Gold certification requires a demonstration in improving health behaviors or outcomes as a result of your program.

Q: What is the Innovation Award? Is it different from Healthy Workplaces accreditation?

A: The Innovation Award recognizes a specific policy or program considered to be exceptional or outstanding, and is awarded to a limited number of applicants. By contrast, the Healthy Workplaces certification is an overall snapshot of the organization's commitment to wellness across several areas of health promotion, and all organizations that meet the criteria will be recognized.

Q: Are small businesses eligible to apply? What about businesses that are headquartered outside Howard County?

A: Any business with a workplace located in Howard County is eligible to apply. The business can be local, regional, national, or global, as long as there is a site in Howard County. We welcome applications from organizations of all sizes and industries.

Q: What is the difference between the policy, program, and promotion categories?

A: We've organized the lists of efforts and activities into categories. "Policies" are the guidelines set forth by your business to ensure a health and safe work environment. "Programs" are activities that are held on-site before, during or after work hours. "Promotion" activities are off-site wellness activities that you advertise and promote to your employees.

Q: Can the Health Department help me with the application?

A: Yes we can! Please contact the Healthy Workplaces Coordinator at (410) 313-6268 or email healthyworkplaces@howardcountymd.gov.

Q: If my business is designated a *Healthy Workplace*, will I have to re-apply next year?

A: Yes. Healthy Workplace certification is good for a year and designations are typically given out every fall. The Health Department will contact you regarding the recertification process.

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